

## Era 2: Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples, 4000-1000 BCE

### Study Guide:

#### Why Study This Era?

- This is the period when civilizations appeared, shaping all subsequent eras of history. Students must consider the nature of civilizations as both a particular way of organizing society and a historical phenomenon subject to transformation and collapse.
- In this era many of the world's most fundamental inventions, discoveries, institutions, and techniques appeared. All subsequent civilizations would be built on these achievements.
- Early civilizations were not self-contained but developed their distinctive characteristics partly as a result of interactions with other peoples. In this era students will learn about the deep roots of encounter and exchange among societies.
- The era introduces students to one of the most enduring themes in history, the dynamic interplay, for good or ill, between the agrarian civilizations and pastoral peoples of the great grasslands.

#### Objectives:

- Be able to explain the major characteristics of civilization and how civilizations emerged in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus valley.
- Explain how agrarian societies spread and new states emerged in the third and second millennia BCE.
- Describe the political, social, and cultural consequences of population movements and militarization in Eurasia in the second millennium BCE.
- Describe trends in Eurasia and Africa from 4000 to 1000 BCE.

#### Focus:

How did Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus valley become centers of dense population, urbanization, and cultural innovation in the fourth and third millennia BCE?

#### Activities:

- Draw upon selections from the Code of Hammurabi to analyze what it suggests about ethical values, social hierarchy, and relationships between men and women in Mesopotamia. *How does the Mesopotamian value system compare with modern American ethical and legal standards?*
- Construct a theory to account for Egypt's early unification under one ruler, whereas early Mesopotamia was a region of competing city-states. Find evidence to support the theory.

- Compare and contrast Mesopotamian ziggurats and Egyptian pyramids. *What economic and social preconditions had to exist to make their buildings? What motives impelled their building? What difference did they make to the lives of those who actually labored in the building process?*
- Examine the way the Indus people laid out and constructed their cities. *What does this evidence suggest about their government, political and economic organization, and values?*

Focus:

How did commercial and cultural interactions contribute to change in the Tigris-Euphrates, Indus, and Nile regions?

Activities:

- Investigate evidence for the hypothesis that Egyptian, Indian, and Mesopotamian societies borrowed from each other. *In what ways might such borrowing have taken place? What effects might cultural innovations have on a receiving society? Why are foreign innovations sometimes rejected? What are some modern examples of both cultural borrowing and rejection?*
- Construct a chart showing the geographical features of Mesopotamia that encouraged trade with others (e.g., their lack of raw materials and access to the sea) and those features that inhibited trade (i.e., mountain barriers). Find evidence to decide whether the favorable features outweighed the unfavorable.
- Using physical maps of Eurasia and considering both geographical barriers and potential routes of communication between China and India or Southwest Asia, complete a map reflecting the various trade routes they shared. Conclude from the map the following: *What evidence is there for cultural contacts between China and these other centers of civilization in antiquity?*

For discussion:

Debate the relative importance of physical geography, demand for and available supply of specific resources, and centralized political power in the development of trade, using Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley during the third millennium BCE as case studies.

Focus:

How did civilization emerge in northern China in the second millennium?

Activities:

- Each individual must complete: Construct a conversation, based on historical evidence, between a Shang priest and a Sumerian priest, comparing notes about religious beliefs and the uses of writing.

Focus:

How did new centers of agrarian society arise in the third and second millennia BCE?

Activities:

- Create a map indicating the most important urban centers of Southwest Asia, Egypt, and the Aegean basin as of about 2000 BCE. *What has archaeology revealed about the development of cities along the eastern Mediterranean coast, notably Byblos and Ugarit? In what ways did these cities form a commercial bridge between the networks of Southwest Asia, Egypt, and the eastern Mediterranean?*

Focus:

How did population movements from western and Central Asia affect peoples of India, Southwest Asia, and the Mediterranean region?

Activities:

- Rely upon scholarly evidence to describe the characteristics of the relations between early herders and farmers. *In what ways could relations between pastoral peoples and agrarian societies involve both conflict and mutual dependence?*

*Additional information may be forthcoming!*